

## Fiat Spiritus Community Celebrates new Member

*Bro. Bob Overland, FS Provincial*



Sr. Isolde Schneider, FS,

### *SPIRITSONG*

Welcome to the third issue of "SpiritSong", the official publication of the Fiat Spiritus Community sent to the individuals that form the three expressions of the Charism of Blessed Catherine Kasper. Our hope is that our stories in this publication will reveal the ways in which we live our expression of the charism and share news as our story unfolds. In this issue we share the news of a new member of our community.

It is with great joy that I share the news that Sr. Isolde Schneider professed her vows of Poverty, Chastity and Obedience on July 17th in the PHJC Motherhouse in Dernbach, Germany. Sr. Claudia & Fr. Jim Swarhout, FS joined me in the journey to Dernbach to receive the vows of our first German Fiat Spiritus Community member. Isolde and I have engaged in a year long formation period taking advantage of recent technology of Skype to engage in weekly sessions to prepare for this important step in Isolde's life. Since formation concentrates on matters of the Spirit, language does not always come clearly and easily but Isolde speaks wonderful English as well as Spanish so we were able to in time find the words needed. Sr. Simone Weber, PHJC German Provincial was also involved in parts of the process to recognize that the introduction of the Fiat Spiritus Community in Germany also an event in the life of the German PHJC Community. I was able to spend ten days in Dernbach during May 2010 to conclude formation with Isolde but also to meet with PHJC Sisters, Katherine Kasper Circle and the EVA Group. These sessions provided time for extended dialogue and response to questions for clarification. I was very happy to travel with Isolde to her home city of Neunkirchen near the French boarder. There is a long history of PHJC ministry there and three PHJC sisters remain. Sr. Stephanita is one of these PHJC Sisters. She and Isolde meet each evening and share a meal, prayer and share faith together. My visit with Isolde to her place of ministry was enlightening. Isolde serves as an Occupational Therapist in a Catholic

Long Term Care Facility. When we arrived on the unit where Isolde works the group of residents sitting around a table noticed Isolde and all of them immediately broke into smile and wanted to engage her in conversation. It was in that moment that I knew that Isolde was indeed a follower of Catherine Kasper and a member of the Fiat Spiritus Community. The vows celebration on July 17th, 2010 was attended by many PHJC Sisters, members of PHJC General Leadership, friends and family of Isolde. The chapel was filled with sunflowers which Sr Simone reminded us "Open their faces to God". The service was enhanced by wonderful music as we witnessed Isolde consecrate her life through vows and guided by the Way of Life of the Fiat Spiritus Community. The Reception following the Evening Prayer was a joyfilled event with wonderful light food and great sweets. I was privileged on behalf of the Fiat Spiritus Community members to present Isolde a gift of a framed copy of the artwork created by one of the Founding Members of the Fiat Spiritus Community Donna Quathammer a watercolor of the Holy Spirit with the words "Do not put out the Spirit's Fire". We now look forward to the challenge of living into community on two continents.



Sr. Isolde Schneider professing Her vows

*Freely responding to the Spirit...with attentive ears, contented hearts and joyful*

## Emmaus Moments in Dernbach

Sr. Claudia Swarthout, FS

This summer Jim and I had the unique privilege of being present to receive the vows of Sr. Isolde Schneider into the Fiat Spiritus Community in Dernbach Germany. As we prepared for our trip, we found ourselves referring to it as “journey of a lifetime,” and reflecting back on the whole experience, I believe it was just that, on so many levels.

Brother Bob, Jim and I arrived in Dernbach Germany on July 14, with Sr. Isolde picking us up at the airport and artfully navigating the Autobahn through the beautiful German countryside with calm and expertise! As we approached Dernbach, I grew more and more aware of the fact that we were now driving through the same fields and villages that had been home for Catherine Kasper, our foundress! It was not difficult to find the Motherhouse of the Poor Handmaids in this tiny village, and we were welcomed with open arms by Srs. Christiane and Simon. We experienced our first real German meal of bread, cold cuts, yogurt and fruit, and spent the rest of the evening enjoying our time with Isolde and experiencing community with her, “up close and personal” for the first time!

That next day, Isolde, Bob, Jim and I spent the day together visiting the Abby of Hildegard of Bingen and enjoying real German cuisine at an outdoor restaurant on the banks of the Rhine. Maybe my choice of ordering the house specialty, “pig knuckles” was a mistake, but the German beer and community fellowship were wonderful! Later that evening, in the company of a few Poor Handmaid community members, we took the short walk to the Heilborne, the place of prayer and inspiration for Catherine throughout her life. As we walked up the cobblestone path, I was amazed at the size and strength of the old Linden tree that stood guard over the small chapel. Sitting in the shade of that huge tree and experiencing the sunset in the quiet of the Heilborne brought healing and peace to the end of a beautiful day with our new community member.

The next few days were filled with more sharing, conversation, relaxation and fun, plus rehearsal for the vows ceremony that was to take place in the Motherhouse chapel on Saturday, July 17, during Vespers. Each of the Fiat Spiritus Community members present played a special part in this beautiful ceremony, and I felt especially privileged to have been asked to give the reflection on the reading chosen by Isolde.

As Isolde professed the vows of chastity, poverty and obedience and then received her Fiat Spiritus Community pin, I felt a deep gratitude to the Poor Handmaids of Jesus Christ that had lived the chrisim of Katherine over all these years, keeping it alive and vibrant, so that we as Fiat Spiritus members could now share it with Isolde!

The celebration closed with a festive dinner for Sister Isolde and all guests present, including community members, family and friends. Later that evening, with a good bottle of German wine and chocolates, we sat down with Sr. Christiane, Sr. Simone and Sr. Gonzalo and reviewed the wonderful events of the day. As the Poor Handmaids shared their many years of living the charism of Katherine, and we shared our “new beginnings,” Jim, Bob Isolde and I later marveled at how intimately we felt Catherine’s presence with us as Poor Handmaids and Fiat Spiritus Community members alike shared hopes for the future of religious life. An Emmaus moment such as that truly made our trip, a “journey of a lifetime.”



Sr. Isolde receiving the Fiat Spiritus Community pin



Sr. Claudia, FS “Welcome and Peace!”

## **My Journey** *Sr. Isolde Schneider, FS*

How did it come to be that I entered the novitiate of the Fiat Spiritus Community It was an important step in my spiritual life. I was called to grow deeper into the charism of Katharina Kasper. For many years I was able to witness the charism by many Poor Handmaid of Jesus Christ sisters that I met in my life and that influenced me. The desire for a spiritual community in which I can live as it matches my cur-rent service and the phase of life and its service geared to the needs of time grew.

Brother Bob has accompanied me through many conversations during this formation time. we heard the distinction of our spirits. On July 17, 2010 after a period of exchange and learning about the Fiat Spiritus Community Way of Life and constitutions of the community with God's grace I was allowed to take vows of chastity, poverty and obedience in the PHJC Motherhouse Chapel in Dernbach. The Fiat Spiritus community is scattered and yet together relating as community, it reflects Religious Life thus.

The selected Gospel in the professions ceremony told us: "Do not let your hearts be confused". God unites us again and again, especially in the Eucharist and the bread that was scattered in the grains. God brings us home again and again, from all corners of the world, he brings us home if we remain on track in our spiritual life. Spiritual living is not bound to traditions and certain types of work, but the Spirit of God which in our Church acts and takes us. Jesus Christ, he is the one who calls us to follow and to grow deeper in his love. For Germany itself I hope a growth of the community so that the charism of Blessed Catherine Kasper draws wide circles.



Members of the Fiat Spiritus Community pray for God's blessings on the newest member



Members of the Poor Handmaid of Jesus Christ Community greet Sr. Isolde after Vespers



Sr. Stephanita, PHJC on Left  
Sr. Isolde, FS Middle and  
a co-worker of Isolde's on Rt.

## Returning a Gift

Fr. Jim Swarthout, FS



That sentence scrolled across my computer screen the other day this morning.. We ...are...more...than...we...seem. It concept that I want to believe, but I'll admit, I have the toughest time believing and putting into practice in my daily life. Maybe that is why I turned it into a computer screen saver. After all, if I see it often enough, then I really might begin to believe it.

When we came into Germany about 10 hours late, and Brother Bob and Isolde met us, I wondered if this is how Mother Mary wondered when she sent the first sisters to America. Were they late, on time, lost and wondered, why are we where? We were tired in a new land and a new vision of ministry was beginning, but this time the American's were coming to Germany to expand the message of the Spirit.

How about you? Do you believe that you are more than you seem? The quick answer is, "Well, of course I believe that I am!" But if you really do, how does that affect your daily life? Belief is a funny thing. We believe a lot of things about ourselves, about life, and about what makes up a good and valued life. Yet for many people, beliefs are a very cerebral or intellectual thing. Their beliefs may not influence the way they live their daily lives. For others, beliefs are more subtle and so much more powerful. Isolde together with Bob, Claudia and the Fiat Spiritus Community are becoming, we are no longer apart from each other we are apart of each other – from the America's to Germany.

The message of the Lord Jesus to His followers, such as Mother Mary- then and now - is one that must affect they way life is led. Calling Jesus our Lord and Savior cannot be just a bunch of pious words; it must reflect the attitude and lifestyles of today's disciples, believers and followers. The attitude and life-style of a follower of Christ is all about knowing and putting into practice that we are all more than we seem. Isolde heard the message of Christ, as many of us from the heart of Mother Mary. As we left we stopped at the Heilborne, filled up a bottle of water, hid it in the bottom of my bag. It now sits next to a picture of Mother Mary, water of new life from Germany, now within our home in Barrington Hills. So life turns, Mother Mary sending over sisters from Germany. The Fiat Spiritus going over to Germany to continue the message of Christ through Mother Mary.

We are the beneficiaries of a spiritual life from the One who told us, "I have come that you may have life and have it abundantly."

Bet on it! We are more than we seem.  
Believe it.



Fr. Jim , FS "Welcome and Peace"